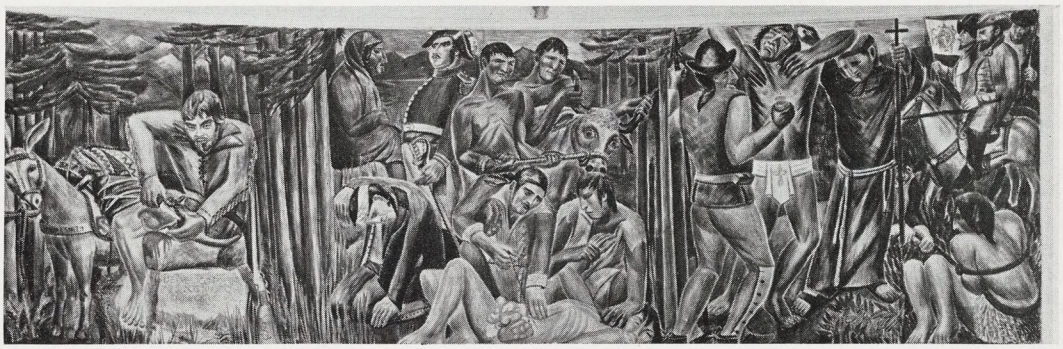
SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION
BULLETIN
VOL. 4 OCTOBER, 1937 NO. 3



Fresco Panel by Bernard Zakheim in Tolland Hall at the University of California Hospital, San Francisco.
A WPA Federal Art Project.

The Artist, the Art Project, and the Public

By BEN CUNNINGHAM

THE DEPRESSION is directly and indirectly the cause of a renewed interest in the arts.

The Federal Art Project was primarily designed to find work for the needy unemployed along the lines of their particular interest and training—but the project has matured beyond its original objective. There is no question but that the result has been to conserve the talents of artists and to allow them the security to formulate the spirit of an indigenous culture. The important consideration in evaluating the worth of the project is to determine the artist's and the public's reaction.

From the artist's point of view the contribution cannot be considered relative. The difference between being able to paint and not being able to paint is absolute. From there on the morale of the artist is of primary importance to his work. The compromises demanded of the artist in an attempt to adjust his ideals to a plastically illiterate public is one of the definite drawbacks to the situation as it exists. This is unfortunate in our highly socialized environment, because the tendency has always been toward eccentricity as an attempt to save the personality, or toward over-conformity, which does not extend the frontiers of expression. The artist is attempting to establish his prestige among his fellow workers and with the general public. His prestige is automatically enhanced in any situation where collaboration is required with other artists, craftsmen or mechanics.

The conditions affecting his prestige with the general public are not so fortunate. There is a definite stigma attached to the relief implication. The artist is working on a subsistence wage generally below the hourly rate paid capable workers in other fields. His value to society is so newly established and of such transient nature that he has not realized his possibilities. He has so long been out of adjustment with his contemporaries that his attitude is hostile and generally defensive. All of these drawbacks are balanced against an opportunity to work in relatively conducive circumstances. The artist has at his disposal publicity, framing and matting, exhibitions and the securing of sponsorship for his wall painting and fixed sculpture. He has the facilities for technical advice and assistance of a highly professional calibre which under previous circumstances he might not be able to afford. He has the opportunity to experiment, design and work in various media that are in some instances altogether new. Above and beyond all this he has the exciting prospect of seeing solution by others of his own plastic problems. These factors are not to be underestimated in the artist's realization that his aspirations have some future.

If we are not over-presumptive in assuming that the artist is being incorporated into society

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An American Renaissance

By Lucien Labaudt

Out of all the shuffles of the Government to help artists, there has developed a thing of importance that needs perpetuation as part of American life. That is the Federal and Treasury projects.

We all know that artists cannot work without backers. Everyone knows, also, that in time of distress art becomes a luxury. But it is not

Labaudt at work on hsi fresco at the Beach Chalet. *A WPA Federal Art Project.*

economy to let cultured people deteriorate. Through necessity the Government has become patron. In that we become parallel to the greatest period in the history of art.

Michelangelo, Fra Angelico, de la Francesca and others did not make the Renaissance. The Italian Renaissance, sponsored by the Church, made them by giving them projects to execute. They had their limitations as to subjects, they had to serve the Church. But these limitations did not impair their creative power and careful craftsmanship, on the contrary. Repeating the same subject over and over seems to have given a new impetus to their creative ability.

Limitation forces one to think and therefore to create. If we understand our role as Government workers, our duty is to serve the Government. By conforming ourselves to the program our contributions in public buildings must be understood by the people at large. The program and the function of the building become the main factors.

Far from destroying the artist's individuality, these limitations give him something to fight for. He must solve a problem. The way he does it will express his personality. Organization of the subject-matter within a space (geometry), the materialization of the subject-matter (drawing), plus color, and last, all the qualities of the artist to complete the work in a craftsmanship that will make his work lasting, and to do it within a given time—such a program seems to be at the base of all great art periods.

Surrounded with works of art in all public buildings, the people will develop an art consciousness and the young generation, knowing that art is a function of life, will take to the profession with a desire to be useful. Willing to work under masters until they can express themselves and be given projects of their own, the title of master once more will have a real meaning.

We are a little close to all this; too close to realize what has happened. But we do know that about us is being created a functional and national art—maybe international, or better universal.

* * *

Letter From Worth Ryder

Following is an excerpt from a letter dated August 24, 1937, from Mr. Worth Ryder, Paris:

"I have found the people over here very much interested at the turn which art has taken in America through the efforts of the WPA. They are particularly impressed with the fresco work done in California, which far exceeds any mural work now being done abroad.

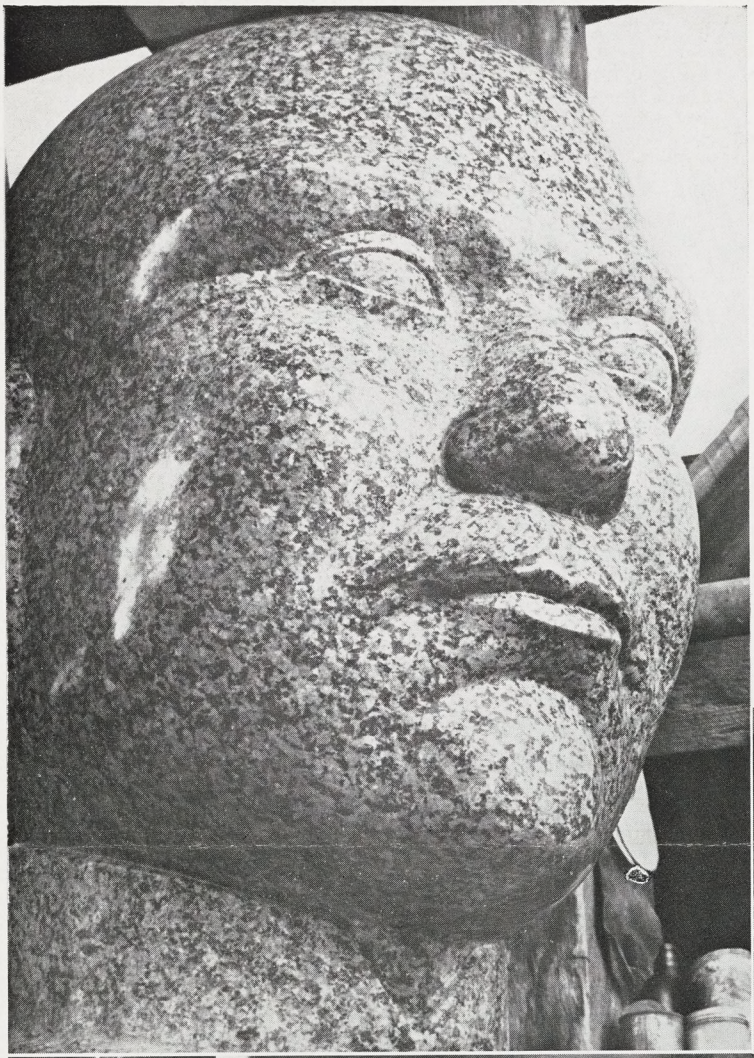
"There are exceptions in the case of a few isolated individual artists, who are working in very modern materials and in new ways. But there is no national movement of any consequence that I have seen.

"The architecture done in the modern manner in Europe far exceeds ours, however. The U. S. building at the Exposition is dull as can be except for the WPA exhibit. The building itself is monotonous and lacking in courage and in imagination.

"I hope that the WPA is going ahead with its fine work."

* * *

A portfolio of twenty lithographic prints was dispatched by W. P. A. Division of Art to Seattle and presented to President Roosevelt aboard his special train. These prints are six of the Bay Bridge series by Otis Oldfield, six of Arthur Murphy's popular series of Golden Gate Bridge workers, three of the color reproductions of California's ancient cave paintings by Lala Rivol and five of Alberté Spratt's series of hand-colored California Wildflower plates.



The statue of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, the great Chinese Patriot, by Beniamino Bufano, will be unveiled November 12 in the Chinese Park, opposite Old St. Mary's Church. It will be about fifteen feet high. The body is of stainless steel; head, hands and feet of red granite. It was sponsored by the Kuo Min Tang (Chinese National Party) and is to be presented to the city of San Francisco on the occasion of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen's birthday, November 12. To left—detail of head. Below—Bufano riveting a seam inside the torso.

A WPA Federal Art Project.

San Francisco Art Association Bulletin

Published Monthly by The San Francisco Art Association
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That Jury System Again

NEXT month the Art Association Water Color Annual will again be hung in the Museum. Even as this is being written artists are matting and framing their paintings and soon a jury will meet and pass upon them.

Then will follow the usual rejections, and, coincident with them, the dissatisfaction and argument. We shall hear of recommendations and special meetings—and, with their grievances having found utterance, the artists will again go back to their work—and nothing will have been achieved!

Is it really impossible to determine upon a better plan than that of our present jury system? Are the artists of the Art Association in the same class as the dilletante or layman, whose efforts receive the same consideration?

We submit the following as a suggestion not yet tried by the Art Association: *That one piece of work by each active artist member be included in each exhibition, said work to be selected by the jury from a group of at least three. If an artist submits but one piece the jury is not bound to accept it.*

This will mean extra work on the part of the jury. But is it sufficiently sound to warrant the work it entails? —M. R.

* * *

The Cézanne exhibition has been the most successful presentation of the San Francisco Museum of Art. Attendance totaled nearly one thousand a day. Art connoisseurs traveled from all parts of the country to see this magnificent event—the largest collection of Cézanne's work ever assembled in America.

* * *

Correction

The drawing, "W. V. X., Jerome," which hung in the San Francisco Art Association Graphic Show was by Edgar Dorsey Taylor, not Edward Taylor, as originally printed in the September BULLETIN. Our apologies.

New Members

Lay—Dr. Russel V. Lee, Mrs. Edwin Joseph.

Active Artist—Mrs. Kedma Dupont, Miss Esther C. Meyer, Mr. Chiura Obata, Mr. Daniel M. Mendelowitz, Miss Frances Roeding, Miss Patricia Williams.

Associate Artist—Miss Alberta H. Baker, Miss Mark Milsk, Mr. Lawrence A. Patterson, Miss Della May Huebner, Miss Virginia Roberts.

Transferred from Associate to Active Artist—Miss Avis Zeidler, Mrs. Margaret Cavaney, Mr. David Chun.

* * *

Carnegie Program Opens

THE Carnegie Program in Art Appreciation began at the San Francisco Museum of Art October 4 with resounding success.

For the course in the Museum enrollment was so enthusiastic that the three classes were filled a week before opening, with a waiting list surpassing the number of accepted registrations. Each of the three classes was expanded to accommodate more members than was originally intended, but a great number of applicants must content themselves with the hope of being first next year.

The Carnegie Program in Extension, which will bring a series of art exhibitions to all the communities of northern California, has also been booked well into next summer. Six exhibitions, each to be shown for a period of two weeks, make up the series. As the Museum has prepared four parallel series, and as each exhibition contains 20 items, all 480 fine color reproductions and original works will soon be on exhibition in some 24 different communities.

—C. L.

* * *

San Francisco Museum of Art Afternoon Series

Thursday Afternoon Play Readings
By Madefrey Odhner. 2 to 4 o'clock

October 7—*Of Mice and Men.* John Steinbeck.
October 14—*The Ascent of F6.* Auden-Isherwood.
October 21—*Peace.* Aristophanes.
October 28—*Amphytrion 38.* Giraudoux-Berman.

Friday Afternoon Poetry Readings
By Madefrey Odhner. 2 to 4 o'clock

October 1—*Robinson Jeffers.*
October 8—*Langston Hughes.*
October 15—*Countee Cullen.*
October 22—*Marie DeL. Welch.*
October 29—*Walt Whitman.*

The Artist, the Art Project, and the Public

(Continued from Page One)

as a valuable member it is important that we understand the public's reaction to this phenomenon. The resistance of the American public toward American art is recognized. It starts from the realization that America has had no discernible part in the formation of such classicisms as we accept. There is, however, an American art feeling in existence and it has been one of the primary objectives of the Federal Art Project to tabulate and reproduce it. This is being done extensively at the present time in the Index of American Design, which is gathering and cataloguing works of American authorship prior to 1900. It is too soon to predict what effect this compilation of material will have on the future of American design, but it is not over-enthusiastic to say that it is worth many times the investment from a cultural-historic viewpoint.

The American Government is now accumulating work in the same way that the French government has for years. The value of the Louvre in terms of national prestige cannot be estimated. In the same sense our Federal Government is accumulating a national wealth.

The public, regardless of its esthetic convictions, reacts very favorably to well-designed works. We find the peculiar phenomenon that work in this country stems from many tendencies. It will be the salvation of our esthetic future when we find that we have welded the fine tendencies of all the cultures of the past into an American tradition. It appears that this is not in the too distant future. Already we have in this locality a tendency to use the "American Scene" in a less illustrative manner. With the realization of its plastic significance American art will have come of age. The maturity of American art and its realization by the public is being furthered by works in schools, public buildings, classes for children, lectures, articles and exhibitions which are designed to expose to the public (which has been too passive) our native culture. If the contribution of the artist and the growing realization of his place can be synchronized before the indulgence of the public is exhausted we will have reached a state of spiritual emancipation that will preclude a return to our former indifferent state. It is sincerely hoped that the public will demand the continuation of the art projects on a basis more mature than as a phase of the unemployment problem.

A summary of the opportunities that the Federal Art Project is providing that manifestly could never occur under private industry are:

1. A certain measure of security for our master artists with established reputations, and opportunities for them to design and execute large, important public works.

2. The opportunity for younger artists with talent and ability to gain experience working with the master artists and craftsmen and to use such experience to compete for new jobs as they occur.

3. Fine contemporary works of art by the best artists are made available to schools, libraries, public buildings, hospitals, etc., within the reach of their budgets. Some twenty portfolios, each containing 16 or more lithographic prints, are being constantly circulated among the rural elementary schools of the state.

4. Opportunity through the Exhibition program, and lending print galleries to bring living, original works of art to large areas where any art at all has previously been unknown.

5. Such an enterprise as the Index of American Design, which is recording, classifying and reproducing the entire history of American design over the whole country.

Bernard Zakheim and detail of fresco, University of California Hospital.—*A WPA Federal Art Project.*

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Current Exhibitions in Local Galleries

Amberg-Hirth, 165 Post Street: Through October, Textiles, by Jane Hopper. Hand-blocked Table Linen, by James Keenan and Eloise Krysiak.

Art Center, Mercedes Building, 251 Post Street: Continuing through October 16, Group Show, by members. October 18-30, Pastels, by Marion Cunningham.

Artists' Cooperative League, 166 Geary Street: Through October 15, Portrait Sketches, by Rodolphe Kiss.

Bay Region Art Association Gallery, Fifth Floor, Capwell, Sullivan & Furth Building, Oakland. Open 1:30 to 5:30 p. m., daily except Sundays and holidays. September 22 to October 14, Gladys Clark Tabb, Water-Colors. Invitation is extended to a tea, honoring her, on October 2nd, at 3 p. m. in the Gallery. October 14 to November 3, Florence Reinhold Earnist, Oils. Tea, in her honor, October 16th, at 3 p. m. in the Gallery. October 27, Forum meeting for members and guests at 3 p. m. Speaker, Mrs. A. A. Thiel, president of Art Lovers' Club. Subject, "The Importance of Art."

California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park: October 1 to 25, Cleveland Oil Paintings. October 14 to November 14, inclusive, Six Contemporary Hungarian Painters.

Courvoisier Galleries, 133 Geary Street: Through October, Oils, by Frederick Taubes.

M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, Golden Gate Park: Opening October 4, Modern Architecture in England. October 5 to November 5, Index of American Design, a WPA exhibit. October 22 to November 22, inclusive, Prints by British Wood Engravers.

Duncan, Vail Company, 116 Kearny Street: September 29 to October 13, Water-Colors, by Nat Levy. October 13 to 27, Academy of Advertising Art Exhibition, by Students and Faculty.

Gump Galleries, 246 Post Street: September 27 to October 16, Paintings, by the late Henry Alexander. October 11 to 23, Water-Colors, by William R. Cameron. October 25 to November 13, Annual Exhibition of the California Society of Etchers.

Oakland Art Gallery, Civic Auditorium, Oakland: October 3 to 31, Annual Exhibition of Water-Colors, Pastels, Prints and Drawings.

Paul Elder Gallery, 239 Post Street: September 25 to October 16, Drawings and Water-Colors, by Nicolai Hetrovo. October 18 to November 6, Drawings and Etchings, by Mark Milsk.

San Francisco Museum of Art, War Memorial, Civic Center: Through October 3, Paul Cézanne. Through October 30, Photographs, by Edward Weston. Through October 10, Contemporary German Painting. October 4 to November 1, Paintings, by Aline Liebman. October 9 to November 7, inclusive, Annual Exhibition of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists.

Shell Building, 100 Bush Street: October 1 to 15, Mervin Cohn, Water-Colors.

Sierra Club, Mills Tower: September 27 to October 11, Tempera Paintings, by Leland Curtis—made on the 1937 Sierra Club Outing to Glacier National Park and Canada.

Willard E. Worden Gallery, 312 Stockton Street: Through October, Italian Renaissance and Contemporary American Art in Christmas Cards.